

Pragmatics and Language Learning Conference
Indiana University
October 31- Nov 2, 20224

Colloquium 1
Integrating Pragmatics in Less Commonly Taught Languages

Thursday, October 31, 2024
4:00 - 6:00pm
Dogwood Room

Pragmatic competence has long been considered an important aspect of second language learners' language ability, yet pragmatic instruction is rarely found in the curricula of less commonly taught languages (LCTLs). In this colloquium, we will discuss different ways of integrating pragmatics in LCTL programs, which can also be used in more commonly taught languages. We will provide examples of various speech acts in Chinese, Estonian, Russian, and KiSwahili, and how they are integrated in and outside the classroom as well as in the study abroad context. We will demonstrate and discuss (1) the importance of and strategies in raising learners' pragmatic awareness, (2) practices of explicit pragmatic instruction in both face-to-face and computer-mediated modes, and (3) development of pragmatically-oriented pedagogical materials and interactional tasks. We will also show how pedagogy of Pragmatics can contribute to innovations of curricula in LCTL programs, and ultimately to enhance interactional competence of second language learners.

Organizers:

- Alwiya S. Omar, Indiana University, Bloomington aomar@indiana.edu
- Yunwen Su, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, yunwensu@illinois.edu
- Maria Shardakova, Indiana University, maalshar@indiana.edu

Developing web-based instructional materials for gift offering and acceptance in L2 Chinese

- Yunwen Su, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, yunwensu@illinois.edu
- Yingling Bao, Indiana University Bloomington, yingbao@indiana.edu

This presentation reports on the development of a self-access online module for the instruction of gift giving and acceptance (GOA) in Mandarin Chinese, adopting Tomlinson and Masuhara's (2018) data-driven and task-based discovery-learning framework. The online module consists of five mini-lessons. Lesson one activates the schema. Specifically, students reflect on the phenomenon of GOA in their native languages and compare that to what they know about Chinese. In lessons two and three, students are first presented with authentic Chinese GOA dialogues and then guided to complete a series of exploratory activities including identifying and analyzing the pragmatic strategies and discourse patterns of authentic GOA dialogues and

textbook GOA dialogues. In lesson four, students are asked to write GOA dialogues in given contexts and provide feedback on other's script writing. In lesson five, students work in pairs to role-play given GOA situations and upload the recordings.

Learning KiSwahili pragmatics and checking for understanding

- Alwiya S. Omar, Indiana University, Bloomington, aomar@indiana.edu

In this presentation, we will show how pragmatics is integrated in the KiSwahili language classroom, and different ways of checking for understanding by focusing on greetings and requests. We will discuss three guidelines outlined by Timpe-Laughlin (2016): 1) Provide enhanced input to give learners opportunities for noticing, 2) Provide opportunities for learners to compare and reflect, and 3) Provide opportunities for social interaction. We will show how these activities are linked to World Readiness Standards of Communication, Cultures Connections, Comparisons, and Community. We will also provide examples to check students' understanding of the focused speech acts through roleplay situations, discourse completion tasks, and viewing of videos of native-speaker interaction followed by discussion and reflection.

The effectiveness of explicit instruction on learners' pragmatic development of Chinese as a foreign language

- Weihua Zhu, University of Wisconsin-Madison, wzhu34@wisc.edu

This study attempts to demonstrate the effectiveness of explicit instruction on eleven learners' pragmatic development of Chinese as a foreign language (CFL). Students' skills in two courses were recorded and compared. No pragmatic instruction was provided in the first course; in the second course that the same CFL learners took later, pragmatic strategies were taught. Results show that after pragmatic instruction, the learners were able to apply sophisticated expressions and appropriate jokes. They manifested a posture of more confidence, more natural facial expressions, more lively body language, more appropriate pausing, better negotiation skills, and more collaborative interaction.

Developing interactional practices in LCTL classrooms and beyond

- Piibi-Kai Kivik, Indiana University Bloomington, pkivik@indiana.edu

The presentation explores an overlap of (speech act) pragmatics and interactional competence (IC), focusing on interaction management in L2 conversations, as doing repairs and responding to these involve apologies and requests for assistance. The study assumes proficiency is crucial for L2 pragmatic development and pragmatic instruction should occur across the curriculum (Roever, 2022). It presents ongoing work of developing instructional materials based on analysis of learner interactions. The data include longitudinal recordings of talk, supplemented by learner and instructor observation reports, documenting both developmental changes as well as emerging "learnables" (Majlesi & Broth, 2012). The pragmalinguistic learnables range from conditional verb forms and modal verbs in formulaic phrases at lower levels to impersonal constructions at upper levels, reflecting the L2 sociopragmatic norms. Over time, learners expand their repertoire for managing interactions. The presentation argues that LCTL programs are well suited for developing instructional materials addressing the specific needs of the learners.

ChatGPT as a tool for learning L2 pragmatics

- Maria Shardakova, Indiana University Bloomington, maalshar@iu.edu

This presentation discusses an exploratory study investigating the integration of ChatGPT in L2 Russian pragmatics instruction. Advanced Russian learners participated in a semester-long study, conducting speech act tasks via electronic correspondence. The research aimed to determine if ChatGPT enhances L2 Russian pragmatic competence and influences learners' L2 communication confidence. The targeted speech acts included information inquiries, requests, informings, apologies, and expressions of gratitude. Students utilized AI technology to edit and/or generate their speech acts. Drawing on Skill Acquisition and Psychological Needs theories, the study employed pre- and post-study tests and communication confidence surveys. Results showed positive effects, evidenced by reduced task times, improved social attunement, increased formulaic expression use, and heightened L2 communication confidence. However, compared to expert users, students lacked indirect strategies and exhibited instances of L1 transfer. These findings highlight ChatGPT's potential in L2 pragmatics instruction, offering insights for teaching strategies and further exploration.